



# HUMAN TRAFFICKING FACT SHEET



Human trafficking is a modern-day form of slavery. Victims of human trafficking are subjected to force, fraud, or coercion, for the purpose of sexual exploitation<sup>1</sup> or forced labor. Victims are young children, teenagers, men and women.

***After drug dealing, human trafficking is tied with the illegal arms industry as the second largest criminal industry in the world today, and it is the fastest growing.***

The Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA) defines "Severe forms of Trafficking in Persons" as:

- **Sex Trafficking:** the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a **commercial sex act**<sup>2</sup>, in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person forced to perform such an act is under the age of 18 years; or
- **Labor Trafficking:** the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud or coercion for the purpose of subjection to **involuntary servitude**, peonage, **debt bondage** or slavery.

In both forms, the victim is an unwilling participant due to force, fraud or coercion.

## **Trafficking Victims**

Approximately 600,000 to 800,000 victims annually are trafficked across international borders worldwide, according to the U.S. Department of State. These estimates include women, men and children. Victims are generally trafficked into the U.S. from Asia, Central and South America, and Eastern Europe. Many victims trafficked into the United States do not speak and understand English and are therefore isolated and unable to communicate with service providers, law enforcement and others who might be able to help them.

## **How Victims Are Trafficked**

Many victims of trafficking are forced to work in prostitution or sex entertainment. However, trafficking also takes place as labor exploitation, such as domestic servitude, sweatshop factories, or migrant agricultural work. Traffickers use force, fraud and coercion to compel women, men and children to engage in these activities.

**Force** involves the use of rape, beatings and confinement to control victims. Forceful violence is used especially during the early stages of victimization, known as the 'seasoning process', which is used to break victim's resistance to make them easier to control.

**Fraud** often involves false offers of employment. For example, women and children will reply to advertisements promising jobs as waitresses, maids and dancers in other countries and are then forced into prostitution once they arrive at their destinations.

**Coercion** involves threats of serious harm to, or physical restraint of, victims of trafficking; any scheme, plan or pattern intended to cause victims to believe that failure to perform an act would result in restraint against them; or the abuse or threatened abuse of the legal process.

Victims of trafficking are often subjected to debt-bondage, usually in the context of paying off transportation fees into the destination countries. Traffickers often threaten victims with injury

<sup>1</sup> "Exploitation" – rather than trafficking - may be a more accurate description because the crime involves making people perform labor or commercial sex against their will.

<sup>2</sup> As defined by the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, the term 'commercial sex act' means any sex act, on account of which anything of value is given to or received by any person.



## NATIONAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING RESOURCE CENTER



### **What Kinds of Technical Assistance Are Available through the National Human Trafficking Resource Center?**

The NHTRC is able to connect community members with additional tools to raise awareness and combat human trafficking in their local areas, as well as guide service providers and law enforcement personnel in their work with potential trafficking victims. Examples of the types of technical assistance available are:

- Direct referrals to local resources and service providers who offer training or technical assistance in a given area;
- Provision of a variety of resources and materials on human trafficking from diverse sources;
- Phone consultations to individuals or organizations who seek detailed technical assistance on a particular topic;
- Assistance with specialized information requests
- Review of third-party materials;
- Support in procuring speakers/trainers for a variety of engagements and events.

### **How Can My Organization Become Involved with the National Human Trafficking Resource Center?**

The NHTRC strives to engage and support local efforts to combat trafficking and to connect callers to contacts, referrals, and resources in their area, including contact with local *Rescue and Restore* coalitions and Human Trafficking Task Forces. In order to provide appropriate referrals and up-to-date resources, the NHTRC is constantly expanding its database of contacts and resource materials and would be happy to hear from you. To learn more, please contact the NHTRC at 1-888-3737-888 or email [NHTRC@PolarisProject.org](mailto:NHTRC@PolarisProject.org).

For more information on human trafficking, visit [www.rescueandrestore.org](http://www.rescueandrestore.org) or [www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking).



## SEX TRAFFICKING FACT SHEET



Sex trafficking is a modern-day form of slavery in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act is under the age of 18 years. Enactment of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA) made sex trafficking a serious violation of Federal law. The TVPA also recognizes labor trafficking, which is discussed in a separate fact sheet.

As defined by the TVPA, the term 'commercial sex act' means any sex act on account of which anything of value is given to or received by any person.

The TVPA recognizes that traffickers use psychological and well as physical coercion and bondage, and it defines coercion to include: threats of serious harm to or physical restraint against any person; any scheme, plan, or pattern intended to cause a person to believe that failure to perform an act would result in serious harm to or physical restraint against any person; or the abuse or threatened abuse of the legal process.

### **Victims of Sex Trafficking and What They Face**

Victims of sex trafficking can be women or men, girls or boys, but the majority are women and girls. There are a number of common patterns for luring victims into situations of sex trafficking, including:

- A promise of a good job in another country
- A false marriage proposal turned into a bondage situation
- Being sold into the sex trade by parents, husbands, boyfriends
- Being kidnapped by traffickers

Sex traffickers frequently subject their victims to debt-bondage, an illegal practice in which the traffickers tell their victims that they owe money (often relating to the victims' living expenses and transport into the country) and that they must pledge their personal services to repay the debt.

Sex traffickers use a variety of methods to "condition" their victims including starvation, confinement, beatings, physical abuse, rape, gang rape, threats of violence to the victims and the victims' families, forced drug use and the threat of shaming their victims by revealing their activities to their family and their families' friends.

Victims face numerous health risks. Physical risks include drug and alcohol addiction; physical injuries (broken bones, concussions, burns, vaginal/anal tearings); traumatic brain injury (TBI) resulting in memory loss, dizziness, headaches, numbness; sexually transmitted diseases (e.g., HIV/AIDS, gonorrhea, syphilis, UTIs, pubic lice); sterility, miscarriages, menstrual problems; other diseases (e.g., TB, hepatitis, malaria, pneumonia); and forced or coerced abortions.

Psychological harms include mind/body separation/disassociated ego states, shame, grief, fear, distrust, hatred of men, self-hatred, suicide, and suicidal thoughts. Victims are at risk for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) – acute anxiety, depression, insomnia, physical hyper-alertness, self-loathing that is long-lasting and resistant to change (complex-PTSD).

Victims may also suffer from traumatic bonding – a form of coercive control in which the perpetrator instills in the victim fear as well as gratitude for being allowed to live.

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- Women and children are overwhelmingly trafficked in labor arenas because of their relative lack of power, social marginalization, and their overall status as compared to men.

#### **Health Impacts of Labor Trafficking**

In addition to the human rights abuses that define their involuntary servitude, victims of labor trafficking suffer from a variety of physical and mental health problems:

- Various methods of forced labor expose victims of labor trafficking to physical abuse such as scars, headaches, hearing loss, cardiovascular/respiratory problems, and limb amputation. Victims of labor trafficking may also develop chronic back, visual and respiratory problems from working in agriculture, construction or manufacturing under dangerous conditions.
- The psychological effects of torture are helplessness, shame and humiliation, shock, denial and disbelief, disorientation and confusion, and anxiety disorders including posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), phobias, panic attacks, and depression.
- Many victims also develop Traumatic Bonding or "Stockholm Syndrome," which is characterized by cognitive distortions where reciprocal positive feelings develop between captors and their hostages. This bond is a type of human survival instinct and helps the victim cope with the captivity.
- Child victims of labor trafficking are often malnourished to the extent that they may never reach their full height, they may have poorly formed or rotting teeth, and later they may experience reproductive problems.

#### **Assistance for Victims of Labor Trafficking**

When victims of trafficking are identified, the U.S. government can help them stabilize their immigration status, and obtain support and assistance in rebuilding their lives in the United States through various programs. By certifying victims of trafficking, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) enables trafficking victims who are non-U.S. citizens to receive federally funded benefits and services to the same extent as a refugee. Victims of trafficking who are U.S. citizens do not need to be certified to receive benefits. As U.S. citizens, they may already be eligible for many benefits.

As a result of the certification or eligibility letters issued by HHS, victims can access benefits and services including food, health care and employment assistance. Certified victims of trafficking can obtain access to services that provide English language instruction and skills training for job placement. Since many victims are reluctant to come forward for fear of being deported, one of HHS' most important roles is to connect victims with non-profit organizations prepared to assist them and address their specific needs. These organizations can provide counseling, case management and benefit coordination.

If you think you have come in contact with a victim of human trafficking, call the **National Human Trafficking Resource Center at 1.888.3737.888**. This hotline will help you determine if you have encountered victims of human trafficking, will identify local resources available in your community to help victims, and will help you coordinate with local social service organizations to help protect and serve victims so they can begin the process of restoring their lives. For more information on human trafficking visit [www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking).



# LABOR TRAFFICKING FACT SHEET



The Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA) defines labor trafficking as: "The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage or slavery." The TVPA also recognizes sex trafficking, which is discussed in a separate fact sheet. A modern-day form of slavery, labor trafficking is a fundamental violation of human rights.

## **Forms of Labor Trafficking**

There are several forms of exploitative practices linked to labor trafficking, including bonded labor, forced labor and child labor.

- **Bonded labor**, or debt bondage, is probably the least known form of labor trafficking today, and yet it is the most widely used method of enslaving people. Victims become bonded laborers when their labor is demanded as a means of repayment for a loan or service in which its terms and conditions have not been defined or in which the value of the victims' services as reasonably assessed is not applied toward the liquidation of the debt. The value of their work is greater than the original sum of money "borrowed."
- **Forced labor** is a situation in which victims are forced to work against their own will, under the threat of violence or some other form of punishment, their freedom is restricted and a degree of ownership is exerted. Forms of forced labor can include domestic servitude; agricultural labor; sweatshop factory labor; janitorial, food service and other service industry labor; and begging.

**Child labor** is a form of work that is likely to be hazardous to the health and/or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development of children and can interfere with their education. The International Labor Organization estimates worldwide that there are 246 million exploited children aged between 5 and 17 involved in debt bondage, forced recruitment for armed conflict, prostitution, pornography, the illegal drug trade, the illegal arms trade and other illicit activities around the world.

## **Identifying Victims of Labor Trafficking**

Victims of labor trafficking are not a homogenous group of people. Victims are young children, teenagers, men and women. Some of them enter the country legally on worker visas for domestic, "entertainment," computer and agricultural work, while others enter illegally. Some work in legal occupations such as domestic, factory or construction work, while others toil in illegal industries such as the drug and arms trade or panhandling. Although there is no single way to identify victims of labor trafficking, some common patterns include:

- Victims are often kept isolated to prevent them from getting help. Their activities are restricted and are typically watched, escorted or guarded by associates of traffickers. Traffickers may "coach" them to answer questions with a cover story about being a student or tourist.
- Victims may be blackmailed by traffickers using the victims' status as an undocumented alien or their participation in an "illegal" industry. By threatening to report them to law enforcement or immigration officials, traffickers keep victims compliant.
- People who are trafficked often come from unstable and economically devastated places as traffickers frequently identify vulnerable populations characterized by oppression, high rates of illiteracy, little social mobility and few economic opportunities.



### **Types of Sex Trafficking**

Victims of trafficking are forced into various forms of commercial sexual exploitation including prostitution, pornography, stripping, live-sex shows, mail-order brides, military prostitution and sex tourism.

Victims trafficked into prostitution and pornography are usually involved in the most exploitive forms of commercial sex operations. Sex trafficking operations can be found in highly-visible venues such as street prostitution, as well as more underground systems such as closed-brothels that operate out of residential homes. Sex trafficking also takes place in a variety of public and private locations such as massage parlors, spas, strip clubs and other fronts for prostitution. Victims may start off dancing or stripping in clubs and then be coerced into situations of prostitution and pornography.

### **Assistance for Victims of Sex Trafficking**

When victims of trafficking are identified, the U.S. government can help them adjust their immigration status, and obtain support and assistance in rebuilding their lives in the United States through various programs. By certifying victims of trafficking, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) enables trafficking victims who are non-U.S. citizens to receive Federally funded benefits and services to the same extent as a refugee. Victims of trafficking who are U.S. citizens do not need to be certified to receive benefits. As U.S. citizens, they may already be eligible for many benefits.

Through HHS, victims can access benefits and services including food, health care and employment assistance. Certified victims of trafficking can obtain access to services that provide English language instruction and skills training for job placement. Since many victims are reluctant to come forward for fear of being deported, one of HHS' most important roles is to connect victims with non-profit organizations prepared to assist them and address their specific needs. These organizations can provide counseling, case management and benefit coordination.

If you think you have come in contact with a victim of human trafficking, call the **National Human Trafficking Resource Center at 1.888.3737.888**. This hotline will help you determine if you have encountered victims of human trafficking, will identify local resources available in your community to help victims, and will help you coordinate with local social service organizations to help protect and serve victims so they can begin the process of restoring their lives. For more information on human trafficking visit **[www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking)**.

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# NATIONAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING RESOURCE CENTER



## **What is the National Human Trafficking Resource Center (NHTRC)?**

The NHTRC is a national, 24-hour, toll-free hotline for the human trafficking field in the United States and is reached by calling **1-888-3737-888** or emailing [NHTRC@PolarisProject.org](mailto:NHTRC@PolarisProject.org). Funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the aim is to provide up-to-date resources on human trafficking, increase access to services for foreign, U.S. Citizen and Lawful Permanent Resident victims and to provide law enforcement, social service providers and community members with the tools to facilitate victim identification in their communities. The NHTRC is operated by Polaris Project, a non-governmental anti-trafficking organization, via a cooperative agreement from HHS.

## **What does the National Human Trafficking Resource Center Do?**

The NHTRC works to improve the national response to protect victims of human trafficking in the U.S. by providing callers with a range of comprehensive services, including crisis intervention, urgent and non-urgent referrals, tip reporting, and comprehensive anti-trafficking resources and technical assistance for the anti-trafficking field and those who wish to get involved. To perform these functions, the NHTRC maintains a national database of organizations and individuals working in the anti-trafficking field, as well as a library of available anti-trafficking resources and materials.

## **Who Can Call the National Human Trafficking Resource Center?**

The NHTRC is equipped to handle calls from all regions of the United States from a wide range of callers, including potential trafficking victims, community members, law enforcement agents, government, medical professionals, legal professionals, students, and policy-makers. To date, calls have most frequently involved questions about human trafficking, reporting of tips about potential trafficking situations, requests for training and technical assistance, requests for service referrals involving potential victims, and general information inquiries about how to get involved in the anti-trafficking movement.

## **How Does the National Human Trafficking Resource Center Respond to Calls?**

The NHTRC is available to answer calls from anywhere in the country, 24 hours a day, 7 days per week, every day of the year. Urgent requests are processed 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. Non-urgent requests are processed between the hours of 9am and 9pm EST, Monday through Friday. If a non-urgent request comes in after 9 pm EST, on the weekend or on a holiday, a message will be taken by the call specialist on duty, and a full-time program staff member will respond to the request within the following week. A chart detailing the available services of the NHTRC is available below.

<b>Available Services – 24 hours a day/7 days a week</b>
Crisis Calls from Victims/Potential Victims
Reporting Tips/Intelligence About Human Trafficking Situations
Training & Technical Assistance Requests - URGENT
Referrals for services - URGENT

<b>Additional Services – 9am – 9pm EST Mon. – Fri.</b>
Training & Technical Assistance Requests – NON-URGENT
Referrals for services - NON-URGENT
General Information Requests

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or death, or the safety of the victim's family back home. Traffickers commonly take away the victims' travel documents and isolate them to make escape more difficult.

Victims often do not realize that it is illegal for traffickers to dictate how they have to pay off their debt. In many cases, the victims are trapped into a cycle of debt because they have to pay for all living expenses in addition to the initial transportation expenses. Fines for not meeting daily quotas of service or "bad" behavior are also used by some trafficking operations to increase debt. Most trafficked victims rarely see the money they are supposedly earning and may not even know the specific amount of their debt. Even if the victims sense that debt-bondage is unjust, it is difficult for them to find help because of language, social, and physical barriers that keep them from obtaining assistance.

#### **Trafficking vs. Smuggling**

Trafficking is not smuggling. There are several important differences between trafficking and smuggling:

Human Trafficking	Vs.	Migrant Smuggling
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Victims are coerced into trafficking. If victims do consent, that consent is rendered meaningless by the actions of the traffickers.</li><li>• Ongoing exploitation of victims to generate illicit profits for the traffickers.</li><li>• Trafficking need not entail the physical movement of a person (but must entail the exploitation of the person for labor or commercial sex).</li></ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Migrants consent to being smuggled.</li><li>• Smuggling is always transnational.</li></ul>

#### **Help for Victims of Trafficking**

Prior to the enactment of the TVPA in October 2000, no comprehensive Federal law existed to protect victims of trafficking or to prosecute their traffickers. The law is comprehensive in addressing the various ways of combating trafficking, including prevention, protection and prosecution. It is intended to prevent human trafficking overseas, to increase prosecution of human traffickers in the United States, and to protect victims and provide Federal and state assistance to certain victims. Victims of human trafficking who are not U.S. citizens are eligible for a special visa and can receive benefits and services through the TVPA to the same extent as refugees. Victims of trafficking who are U.S. citizens may already be eligible for many benefits due to their citizenship.

If you think you have come in contact with a victim of human trafficking, call the **National Human Trafficking Resource Center at 1.888.3737.888**. This hotline will help you determine if you have encountered victims of human trafficking, will identify local resources available in your community to help victims, and will help you coordinate with local social service organizations to help protect and serve victims so they can begin the process of restoring their lives. For more information on human trafficking visit [www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking).



## HUMAN TRAFFICKING CHEAT SHEET

### Overview

- Human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery.
- Human trafficking is prevalent in many countries around the world. Different countries may be primarily sites of origin, transit, destination, and/or internal trafficking.
- Cases of human trafficking have been reported in all fifty states of the United States (Free the Slaves).
- Human trafficking is a market-based economy that exists on principles of supply and demand. It thrives due to conditions which allow for high profits to be generated at low risk.

### What is Human Trafficking?

- As defined in the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, the legal definition of "severe forms of trafficking in persons" is:
  - a) sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age; or
  - b) the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery.
- Under the legal definition, trafficking victims in the US can be divided into three populations:
  - Minors (under age 18) induced into commercial sex;
  - Adults age 18 or over involved in commercial sex via force, fraud, or coercion;
  - Children and adults forced to perform labor and/or services in conditions of involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery, via force, fraud, or coercion.
- Victims are trafficked for a wide variety of purposes, such as commercial sex, agricultural work, or housekeeping, yet they all share the loss of one of our world's most cherished rights—freedom.
- There is no one consistent face of a trafficking victim. Trafficked persons can be rich or poor, men or women, adults or children, and foreign nationals or US citizens.
- There is no one consistent face of a trafficker. Traffickers include a wide range of criminal operators, including individual pimps, small families or businesses, loose-knit decentralized criminal networks, and international organized criminal syndicates.

### The Law

- Human Trafficking is a crime under US and international law, as well as under many state laws.
- The Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) of 2000 is the main US law on trafficking. It has been reauthorized in 2003, 2005 and 2008.
- The "Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children" is the main international law on the subject.

### Statistics

- The number of trafficking victims in the US is largely unknown. However, hundreds of thousands of US citizen minors are estimated to be at risk of commercial sexual exploitation.

### Myths and Misconceptions

- It is important to dispel certain myths about trafficking.
  - Trafficking is not smuggling or forced movement.
  - Trafficking does not require transportation or border crossing, and does not only happen to immigrants or foreign nationals.
  - Trafficking does not require physical force, physical abuse, or physical restraint.
  - The consent of the victim is considered irrelevant, as is payment.

## In Their Shoes: Understanding Victims' Mindsets and Common Barriers to Victim Identification

The following document outlines a wide variety of both physical and psychological reasons why trafficked persons cannot or will not leave a trafficking situation. The list is inclusive of both sex and labor trafficking operations, as well as foreign-born and U.S. citizen victims. Items on this list are not meant to be interpreted as present in all trafficking cases, neither is this list intended to be exhaustive.

- **Captivity/Confinement**
  - Past examples have included victims being locked indoors, held in guarded compounds, or locked in trunks of cars.
- **Frequent accompaniment/guarded**
  - In many trafficking networks, victims' public interactions are mediated, monitored, or entirely controlled. In certain severe cases, victims have been controlled by armed guards.
- **Use and threat of violence**
  - Severe physical retaliation (e.g., beatings, rape, sexual assault, torture) are combined with threats to hold victims in a constant state of fear and obedience.
- **Fear**
  - Fear manifests in many ways in a trafficking situation, including fear of physical retaliation, of death, of arrest, or of harm to one's loved ones.
- **Use of reprisals and threats of reprisals against loved ones or third parties**
  - Traffickers target reprisals at children, parents, siblings, and friends, or other trafficking victims.
- **Shame**
  - Victims from all cultures and in both sex and labor cases may be profoundly ashamed about the activities they have been forced to perform. Self-blame links closely to low self-esteem.
- **Self-blame**
  - In the face of an extremely psychologically manipulative situation, trafficked persons may engage in self-blaming attitudes and blame themselves for being duped into a situation beyond their control. Self-blaming attitudes are often reinforced by the traffickers and can serve to impede the victim from testifying against or faulting the trafficker.
- **Debt bondage**
  - Traffickers create inflated debts that victims cannot realistically pay off. These debts are often combined with accruing interest or small fees to ensure that the victim stays in the debt situation.
- **Traumatic bonding to the trafficker**
  - In many trafficking cases, victims have exhibited commonly-known behaviors of traumatic bonding due to the violence and psychological abuse (a.k.a., Stockholm syndrome).
- **Language and social barriers**
  - Feelings of unfamiliarity or fear of the unknown provide obstacles to leaving a trafficking situation. These feelings are exacerbated by language and social barriers.
- **Distrust of law enforcement or service providers**
  - In many cases, traffickers are known to brainwash victims into a false distrust of law enforcement, government officials, and service providers. Victims also may have had negative past experiences with institutional systems, which also impact trust levels.
- **Isolation**

- Traffickers purposefully isolate victims from a positive support structure and foster controlled environments where the victim is kept in a state of complete dependency. High levels of dependency and learned helplessness often lead victims to 'prefer the hell they know' than face the uncertainty of adapting to a new world of independence.
- **False promises**
  - Traffickers use sophisticated methods of manipulating the human desire to hope through false promises and lies about a future better life. Victims who are children are especially vulnerable to these false promises.
- **Hopelessness and resignation**
  - In the face of extreme control, violence, and captivity, notions of hope may fade over time towards states of hopelessness and resignation.
- **Facilitated drug addiction**
  - In certain trafficking networks, traffickers provide addictive substances to their victims to foster longer-term drug addiction and monetary dependency.
- **Psychological trauma**
  - Many trafficking victims experience significant levels of psychological trauma due to the levels of abuse they have endured. In certain cases, this trauma leads to disassociation, depression, anxiety disorders, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which in turn affects daily functioning and levels of agency.
- **Lack of awareness of available resources**
  - Victims may not leave a situation due to a lack of awareness of any resources or services designed to help them. Traffickers purposefully control the information that victims receive.
- **Low levels of self-identifying as trafficking victims**
  - The majority of trafficking victims do not self-identify as victims of human trafficking. They may be unaware of the elements of the crime or the Federal criminal paradigm designed to protect them.
- **Normalization of exploitation**
  - Over a long period of enduring severe levels of trauma, physical abuse, and psychological manipulation, victims demonstrate resilience strategies and defense mechanisms that normalize the abuse in their minds. In a relative mental assessment, what once may have been viewed as abuse may now be experienced as a normal part of everyday life. This changing "lens" on viewing the world impacts the ability to self-identify as a victim.
- **A belief that no one cares to help**
  - Trafficking victims may believe that no one cares to help them, a belief that is reinforced both by traffickers' lies but also when community members do not take a strong stance against trafficking. When the community is silent on the issue, traffickers' power is increased and feelings of hopelessness are sustained.

In addition to all the above-stated reasons, numerous additional factors contribute to the difficulty of trafficking victim identification. These factors include:

- The **frequent movement of victims** fosters a **low likelihood of multiple encounters** with law enforcement or service providers. Victims may not be in one place long enough for a meaningful intervention.

## Understanding Victims' Mindsets | Polaris Project

- Victims may be **trained to tell lies or canned stories** to the organizations that are there to help them.
- Victims **rarely come into contact with institutional systems**.
- **Untrustworthy or corrupt interpreters** may impact the course of effective service provision.

Polaris Project works to empower and mobilize people from diverse backgrounds and of all ages to take meaningful action against human trafficking. Register with [www.polarisproject.org/signup](http://www.polarisproject.org/signup) to receive regular updates on human trafficking in the United States.

## Potential Trafficking Indicators | Polaris Project

### IDENTIFYING VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

#### POTENTIAL INDICATORS & RED FLAGS

The following is a list of red flags to keep in mind when indicating a potential situation of or a victim of human trafficking. Taken individually, each indicator may not necessarily imply a trafficking situation. Furthermore, items on this list are not meant to be interpreted as present in all trafficking cases, nor is the list intended to be exhaustive. This list is intended to encompass transnational and domestic trafficking, as well as both sex and labor trafficking. Some indicators may be more strongly associated with one type of trafficking.

#### **Common Work and Living Conditions:** The Individual(s) in Question...

- Is not free to leave or come and go as he/she wishes
- Is under 18 years of age and is providing commercial sex acts
- Is in the commercial sex industry and has a pimp/manager
- Is unpaid, paid very little, or paid only through tips
- Works excessively long and/or unusual hours
- Is not allowed breaks or suffers under unusual restrictions at work
- Owes a large and/or increasing debt and is unable to pay it off
- Was recruited through false promises concerning the nature and conditions of his/her work
- Is living or working in a location with high security measures (e.g. opaque or boarded-up windows, bars on windows, barbed wire, security cameras, etc.).

#### **Poor Mental Health or Abnormal Behavior:** The Individual(s) in Question...

- Exhibits unusually fearful, anxious, depressed, submissive, tense, or nervous/paranoid behavior
- Reacts with unusually fearful or anxious behavior at any reference to "law enforcement"
- Avoids eye contact
- Exhibits a flat affect

#### **Poor Physical Health:** The Individual(s) in Question...

- Exhibits unexplained injuries or signs of prolonged/untreated illness or disease
- Appears malnourished
- Shows signs of physical and/or sexual abuse, physical restraint, confinement, or torture

#### **Lack of Control:** The Individual(s) in Question...

- Has few or no personal possessions
- Is not in control of his/her own money, and/or has no financial records, or bank account
- Is not in control of his/her own identification documents (e.g. ID, passport, or visa)
- Is not allowed or able to speak for him/herself (e.g., a third party may insist on being present and/or interpreting)
- Has an attorney that he/she doesn't seem to know or to have agreed to receive representation services from

#### **Other:** The Individual(s) in Question...

- Has been "branded" by a trafficker (e.g. a tattoo of the trafficker's name)
- Claims to be "just visiting" and is unable to clarify where he/she is staying or to provide an address

### **Potential Trafficking Indicators | Polaris Project**

- Exhibits a lack of knowledge of whereabouts and/or does not know what city he/she is in
- Exhibits a loss of a sense of time
- Has numerous inconsistencies in his/her story

Polaris Project works to empower and mobilize people from diverse backgrounds and of all ages to take meaningful action against human trafficking. Register with [www.polarisproject.org/signup](http://www.polarisproject.org/signup) to receive regular updates on human trafficking in the United States.

COMMON MYTHS AND MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN THE U.S

The following document summarizes some of the commonly-held myths and misconceptions regarding the definition of human trafficking and the types of human trafficking operations that exist in the United States. The goal of the document is to address these misconceptions and help shape a more accurate "lens" for identifying and understanding trafficking. A "Top 10" List is provided below.

**Myth 1:** *Under the Federal definition, trafficked persons can only be foreign nationals or are only immigrants from other countries.*

**Reality:** The Federal definition of human trafficking includes both US citizens and foreign nationals - both are equally protected under the Federal trafficking statutes and have been since the TVPA of 2000. Human trafficking encompasses both transnational trafficking that crosses borders and domestic or internal trafficking that occurs within a country. Statistics on the scope of trafficking in the US are only accurate if they include both transnational and internal trafficking of US citizens as well as foreign nationals.

**Myth 2:** *Trafficking is essentially a crime that must involve some form of travel, transportation, or movement across state or national borders.*

**Reality:** The legal definition of trafficking, as defined under the Federal trafficking statutes, **does not require transportation**, although transportation may be involved in the crime, and although the word connotes movement. Human trafficking is not synonymous with forced migration or smuggling. Instead, human trafficking is more accurately characterized as "compelled service" where an individual's will is overborne through force, fraud, or coercion.

**Myth 3:** *Human trafficking is another word for human smuggling.*

**Reality:** There are many fundamental differences between the crimes of human trafficking and human smuggling. Both are entirely separate Federal crimes in the United States. Most notably, **smuggling is a crime against a country's borders, whereas human trafficking is a crime against a person**. Also, while smuggling requires illegal border crossing, human trafficking involves commercial sex acts or labor or services that are induced through force, fraud, or coercion regardless of whether or not transportation occurs.

**Myth 4:** *There must be elements of physical restraint, physical force, or physical bondage when identifying a trafficking situation.*

**Reality:** The legal definition of trafficking **does not require physical restraint, bodily harm, or physical force**. Psychological means of control, such as threats, or abuse of the legal process, are sufficient elements of the crime. Unlike the previous Federal involuntary servitude statutes (U.S.C. 1584), the new Federal crimes created by the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) of 2000 were intended to address "subtler" forms of coercion and to broaden previous standards that only considered bodily harm.

**Myth 5:** *Victims of trafficking will immediately ask for help or assistance and will self-identify as a victim of a crime.*

**Reality:** **Victims of trafficking often do not immediately seek help or self-identify as victims of a crime** due to lack of trust, self-blame, or training by the traffickers. It is important to avoid making a snap judgment based on the first interviews and to understand that trust will take time to develop. Continued trust-building and patient interviewing is often required to get to the whole story.

**Myth 6:** *Trafficking victims always come from situations of poverty or from small rural villages.*

**Reality:** Although poverty is highly correlated with human trafficking because it is often an indicator of vulnerability, **poverty alone is not a single causal factor or universal indicator of a human trafficking victim.** Trafficking victims can come from a range of income levels and many may come from families with higher socioeconomic status.

**Myth 7:** *Sex trafficking is the only form of human trafficking.*

**Reality:** Elements of human trafficking can occur in the commercial sex industry as well as in situations of forced labor or services. **Human trafficking encompasses both "sex trafficking" and "labor trafficking," and can affect men and women, children and adults.**

**Myth 8:** *Human trafficking only occurs in illegal underground industries.*

**Reality:** Elements of human trafficking can be identified whenever the means of force, fraud, or coercion induce a person to perform commercial sex acts, or labor or services. **Trafficking can occur in legal and legitimate business settings as well as underground markets.**

**Myth 9:** *If the trafficked person consented to be in their initial situation or was informed about what type of labor they would be doing or that commercial sex would be involved, then it cannot be trafficking or against their will because they "knew better."*

**Reality:** **A victim cannot consent to be in a situation of human trafficking.** Initial consent to commercial sex or a labor setting prior to acts of force, fraud, or coercion (or if the victim is a minor in a sex trafficking situation) is not relevant to the crime, nor is payment.

**Myth 10:** *Foreign national trafficking victims are always undocumented immigrants or here in this country illegally.*

**Reality:** Foreign national trafficked persons can be in the United States through either legal or illegal means. Although some foreign national victims are undocumented, a significant percentage may have legitimate visas for various purposes. **Not all foreign national victims are undocumented.**



## Types of Trafficking Cases | Polaris Project

### TYPES OF TRAFFICKING CASES IN THE UNITED STATES

The following document provides a brief overview of the types of trafficking cases that have emerged within the United States including, both sex and labor trafficking, as well as domestic and transnational trafficking. The following list is not exhaustive, and the potential presence of human trafficking occurring within each of the industries listed below should be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

#### Labor Trafficking

- Domestic Servitude/Domestic Worker Cases
  - Nannies
  - Maids/Housekeepers
- Small Businesses/"Mom and Pop" Operations
  - Landscaping
  - Nail salons
  - Restaurants
  - Industrial cleaning
  - Construction
  - Hospitality
- Peddling Rings/Sales Crews
  - Magazine sales crews
  - Flowers/Candy sales crews
- Large-Scale Labor Cases
  - Agricultural
  - Factory settings (i.e. garments; food processing)
  - Other large factory work environments (i.e. industrial welding)

#### Sex Trafficking

- "Hostess" Bar/Club Operations with Inflated-Price Schemes
  - These cases may be classified as labor trafficking if commercial sex acts do not occur. However, these operations often involve some linkage with commercial sex acts.
  - Eastern European/Russian stripping or exotic dancing "Go-Go Clubs"
  - Latino cantina bars
  - Asian room salons, hostess clubs, and other karaoke clubs
  - Domestic strip clubs and gentleman's clubs
- Residential/Underground Brothel Settings
  - Residential brothels can be based in homes, apartments, hotel/motel rooms, trailer parks, mobile trailers, and other outdoor locations.

## Types of Trafficking Cases | Polaris Project

- Residential brothels are diverse and can include both foreign born and US citizen populations.
- Escort Services (Both Incall and Outcall)
  - Bar/Hotel-based
  - Internet-based
  - Private parties (house, club, lap dance clubs)
  - Boat cruises
  - Phone chat lines
- Pimp-Controlled Prostitution
  - Hotel-based
  - Internet/Escort-based
  - Private parties
  - Street-based
  - Truck stops
  - Other miscellaneous locations

### Other

- International Marriage Brokers/Servile marriage
- Personal sexual servitude

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